Paper submitted by V.I. Yerofeev[[1]](#footnote-1) for V.M. Molotov, 20 November 1947

BRITAIN’S STANCE ON THE GERMAN QUESTION AFTER THE CONFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IN MOSCOW

[…]

Officially, Britain’s policy on the German issue remains the same since Bevin formulated it in his speech at the House of Commons on 22 October 1946 and in the British memorandum on Germany presented on 31 March 1947 at the Moscow Conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The British officials still note the need for implementing the Potsdam decisions.

[…]

However, in fact, all of the most important actions of the British Government on the Germany issue taken after the Moscow session of Council of Foreign Ministers are aimed at economic and political splitting of Germany, at subjecting the West German zones to British-American, predominantly American, capital, at turning the strong West German industry into an economic base for the anti-Soviet “Western bloc” according to the so-called Marshall Plan[[2]](#footnote-2). . This is evinced by such separate British moves as the setting up of a two-zone economic council in the British-American zone, British-American agreements on the new level of German industry and on management and control over the Ruhr mines[[3]](#footnote-3), on the plan of dismantling German companies, as well as British-American negotiations on financial issues related to the occupation of the merged zone.

[…]

Demilitarisation

The British authorities in Germany do not enforcing the decisions made at the Berlin Conference and the Moscow session of Council of Foreign Ministers on the issue of Germany’s demilitarisation.

[…]

In actual fact, only 50% of military installations and sites in the British occupied German zone have been destroyed, and the rate of their liquidation is not sufficiently high. Only 2 marine bases have been found in the British zones, whereas, according to available data, there are 9 bases in this zone. At the North Sea coast from Wilhelmshaven to Emden all coastal fortifications are preserved in their entirety.

[…]

The British authorities retain a large number of different warehouses with military equipment and weapons, the size of reserves which exceed the needs of the occupation forces. Also retained are major strategic oil storage facilities. […]

Under the guise of needing to establish a certain level of industrial output that would make the economy of the merged zone self-sufficient, the British authorities are pursing the policy of preserving the German military and industrial potential.

Democratisation

[…]

In actual fact, land reforms have not yet been initiated in the British zone.

In discussing the issue of political parties and trade unions at the Moscow session of the Council of Foreign Ministers[[4]](#footnote-4) all the delegations agreed to the principle of free development and functioning of democratic political parties and trade unions. The British (and American) delegation joined the USSR delegation in acknowledging that it was desirable to sustain all–Germany parties and trade unions (Council of Foreign Ministers 47/M/93). An agreement on this point has not been reached because the French delegation did not agree with parties’ and trade unions’ integration on an all-Germany level.

[…]

However, Great Britain’s subsequent policy was aimed against the integration of parties and trade unions and even against free development of parties in the British zone.

[…]

The British policy towards certain parties is based on support of reactionary and reformist parties (Christian Democratic Union and Socialist Democratic Party of Germany) and opposing the influence of the Communist Party and unity of the workers movement (although this opposition is not so overt as in the American zone).

[…]

On the other hand, the British authorities encourage separate mergers of the German trade unions within the two zones, thus putting them on the path to Germany’s division. In April 1947 a decision was taken to integrate the railway unions in the British and American zones. On 5 June this year the conference of trade union representatives of these two zones in Frankfurt on the Main created a two-zone trade union secretariat headquartered in this city. A special committee has been recently set up at this secretariat to prepare a merger of the trade unions of the two zones.

Denazification

The agreed decision on denazification that was adopted at the Moscow session of Council of Foreign Ministers did not have a significant impact on the policy of Great Britain in the British occupied German zone.

The important administrative and economic posts in the British occupied zones are still held by former active Hitlerite leaders of the German military industry.

[…]

At the same time, contrary to the Council of Foreign Ministers decision, the British authorities bring nominal (non-active) members of the Nazi Party to denazification trials.

[…]

At present, the British government officially declared its policy on ending denazification. At the end of August of this year the Commission on Denazification of the zonal council in the British zone adopted a new project on denazification by the former Minister of Justice in North Rhine –Westphalia, Dr. Straeter[[5]](#footnote-5). According to this project, purging should be extended to a relatively limited circle of those guilty and should be completed quickly.

The Procedure of Preparing the Peace Treaty with Germany

[…]

Britain and the USA voted against Albania’s inclusion in the number of Allied States with whom the Council of Foreign Ministers will consult on the issue of the peace treaty preparation. Britain’s position on this issue still has not changed.

Britain, together with the US and France, spoke in favour of China’s participation as an equal party with the four other Great Powers in convocation of a peace conference to discuss the draft treaty. Britain’s position on this issue has still not changed.

The British and French delegations have been reticent regarding their positions on the composition of the peace conference. They have yet not expressed their final position on this issue, reserving it until the exact functions and composition of the proposed information and consultative conference, that will precede the peace conference, are agreed upon.

[…]

Format and Size of the Interim Political Organisation of Germany

Even before the Moscow Conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Britain, together with the US, implemented a number of economic and political measures leading to destruction of Germany’s unity. Britain continues working along the same lines to this day. A clear confirmation of this is the establishment of the so-called Economic Council in the British-American zone in June of this year.

[…]

On Economic Unity of Germany

By accusing the USSR of non-fulfilment of the principle of economic unity of Germany, the British Government conceals its policy of economic and political dismemberment of Germany and wrecking the Yalta and Potsdam decisions on reparations[[6]](#footnote-6). In line with this policy, an economic merger of British and American zones was carried out in December 1946.

[…]

In the Supplementary Laws, as well as in Bevin’s speech of 22 October 1946, the policy of economic enslaving of Germany by British-American capital is promoted while flying the flag of the economic unity. After the Moscow session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the British Government, while accusing the USSR of violating the principle of economic unity, continued, together with the US Government, to pursue its policy of economic and political dismemberment of Germany, subjecting Western parts of Germany to British-American capital and turning them into an economic base for the anti-Soviet “Western bloc”.

[…]

On Reparations from Germany

During the Moscow session of the Council of Foreign Ministers all the delegations agreed to delegate to the Control Council the task of determining, within three months after the reparations plan and the level of the post-war German economy are set, the lists of resources and the volume of equipment, confiscated or due to be confiscated as reparations, in the four zones.

The clause stipulating that “The four delegations agreed with the need to revise the plan of reparations and the level of the post-war German economy” was agreed in principle.

However, the most important issues on reparations remained unsettled, and the British delegation, as a rule, take the American point of view on the unsettled issues.

[…]

Although the British Government did not make any direct statements on the supplies of equipment to the Soviet Union from the Western zones of Germany, given Britain and the USA’s common policy in Germany, Great Britain’s position on this issue is totally defined by the Americans’ position, as set forth in General Clay’s statement[[7]](#footnote-7) of 27 September 1947, that “the USSR must not receive reparations in the form of industrial equipment from the American zone, until economic unity of Germany is established”.

[…]

The British Position on the Saar[[8]](#footnote-8)

[…]

A set of measures aimed at economically separating the Saar from Germany will be completed by the introduction in Saar new currency and the establishment of protective customs cordon along the new border. Since 10 July 1947, an interim currency – the Saar Mark - was introduced in the Saar region [[9]](#footnote-9).

The British Government’s position regarding France’s new measures in the Saar region was formulated by Bevin in his statement in the House of Commons on 11 June of this year. Bevin said that the British government by no means objects to the Saar borders as they are proposed now, or to France’s intention to go forward with its plan on issuing the new currency instead of the German mark within Saar. However, the British position is always dependent on the decisions of the final peaceful settlement and on reaching an acceptable agreement on meeting the French reparation claims.

[…]

At the Paris session of the Council of Foreign Ministers[[10]](#footnote-10) the US delegation proposed a draft agreement between the Four Powers on Germany’s disarmament and demilitarisation.

[…]

In his speech at the Parliament on 15 May 1947 Bevin again eagerly supported the American proposal on such an agreement. […]

Yerofeyev

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1. Yerofeyev, Vladimir Ivanovich (1920–2011) - Soviet diplomat and interpreter. Stalin’s personal French interpreter, member of the Central Organ of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1944–1949), Assistant to First Vice-President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, V. M. Molotov (1949–1955). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A plan for the recovery of the European economy was announced by Secretary of State George Marshall at Harvard on 5 June 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Establishment in November 1947 by the British and American administration in the Bizone, which was given the task of managing the Ruhr mines. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in March-April 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sträter, Arthur (1902–1977) - German lawyer, publisher and political figure, member of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany. Thrice held the post of Minister of Justice of North Rhine-Westphalia (1946–1947, 1948–1950 and 1962–1966). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. According to the resolutions of the Potsdam Conference, all four states were to receive reparations from their zones of occupation and also from German investments abroad. In addition. the USSR was to receive 25% of the entirety of industrial equipment taken from the Western occupation zones, out of which 15% were to be in exchange for shipments of coal, food and other supplies. From its part of reparations the USSR were to satisfy Poland’s reparation claims. All reparations were to be paid in kind by shipments of industrial equipment and goods. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Clay, Lucius (1898 - 1978) - US general. US military governor of Germany (1947 - 1949). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Saarland, a German region bordering France and Luxembourg. After Germany’s defeat in World War I the region was under a League of Nations mandate and its coal mines were declared to be French property. After World War II, the region was occupied by the Allies and became a French protectorate. After a referendum in 1957 it became a part of West Germany. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Saar Mark was to remain in circulation until 15 January 1948. The Saar Franc was introduced on 15 November 1947, and was to remain the region’s currency until 1959. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Paris Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers was held between April and June 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)